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Testimony of Shelagh McClure, Chair
Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities
Before the Appropriations Committee
On House Bill 5016
February 9, 2016

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The Governor has proposed a cut to the FY 2017 budget of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (OPA) of approximately \$200,000. This is made up of annualizing the budget cuts and lapses from this fiscal year and then applying the 5.75% across the board cut that the Governor has proposed.

While the amount of the proposed reduction to OPA may seem small compared to the reductions faced by many agencies, I urge the Committee to begin to exercise the principle that all budget cuts are not created equal.

OPA is THE state agency charged with safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities from discrimination, and protecting such individuals from abuse and neglect. The budgets of the agencies that provide services for such individuals—DDS, DSS, DMHAS-- have been the object of successive years of deep, deep budget cuts, leaving individuals unserved or underserved, and vulnerable. I can think of no worse time to cut the budget of OPA.

OPA is not an agency like DOT, where when the budget is cut, a project can be delayed or postponed. Less money means fewer persons can be served and protected, with real human consequences.

I hope you will reject the Governor's proposed across the board approach to cutting the budget—and I hope you will begin with the budget of OPA.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.